

# French tourism



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France is a country of beauty, mystery, and intrigue. Paris has the most known tourist attractions in the world: The Eiffel Tower, L'arc de Triomphe, and the Louvre to name a few. Paris is called the "City of Light"; the lighting of monuments and buildings emphasizes the beauty of the architecture in the city. The Eiffel Tower is the symbol of Paris, if not the entire country. It is one of the most known monuments in the entire world, and definitely one of the most photographed. It began construction in 1887, designed by the engineer Gustave Eiffel, and was finished in 1889 for the International Exhibition of Paris. It was built to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the French revolution. At first some French people were very much opposed to the large metal monument, and about 300 people signed a petition opposing it. But now it is a large part of Paris, and can be seen from many places in the city. The tower is 310 meters, and was the world's tallest building for many years after its construction. The tower was saved from being torn down in 1909 by its antenna that was used for telegraph transmission. It has been used for French radio and then later for French television broadcast. In 1986, new lighting was added to accentuate the metal frame. Some interesting events have happened on the tower over the years: in 1954 it was scaled by a mountaineer, parachuted off of in 1984, and in 1924 a journalist rode a bicycle down from the first level. There are some discrepancies in the story, some say he rode down the stairs and others say he rode down the sloping legs of the outside. L'arc de Triomphe stands on the avenue of the Champs-Élysées in the Place de l'Étoile. It is a military monument that commenced building in 1806 and finished in 1936 to commemorate Napoleon's victory in battles during the First Empire. The Prussians crossed it in 1871 and by Marshal Foch following the victory of

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1919. It was claimed by the Nazis during the occupation in WW2. A flame burns at the base of the Arc, "The Flame of the Unknown Soldier". It burns in memory of the unidentified casualties from both world wars. The Notre-Dame Cathedral is located on l'Île de la Cité, an island in the Seine River. The construction of the cathedral took less than 200 years, and commenced in 1160 by the orders of Bishop Maurice de Sully. The large cathedral is famous for its rose windows, which were removed during WW2 and reinstalled after the war ended to prevent them from being damaged. Services are still held there, despite it being a large tourist attraction. The Louvre Museum is one of the most known and largest museums of fine arts with over 75,000 paintings. Philip II Augustus built it in the 13th century, and it was originally designed as a fortress to defend the Seine River against the Normans and English. Charles V enlarged the chateau in the 14th century, and the style was abandoned in the 16th century to make way for a Renaissance style structure. In 1565 Catherine de Medicis and her architect, Philibert Delorme, built a small chateau in a neighboring field to the west called "Le Tuileries". Then the Louvre and the Tuileries were joined to form a royal residence by building connecting buildings. After the revolution in 1789, Napoleon I and Napoleon III lived in the Tuileries, the Louvre itself was used for offices and a museum. During the uprising of the Paris Commune in 1871, the Tuileries was burned, and now a view of the Arc du Carrousel, the Tuileries Gardens, the Place de la Concorde, and the Place Charles de Gaulle can be seen. In the 1980's a Chinese-American architect named I. M. Pei designed a large glass and steel pyramid for the central courtyard that was to be the new entrance to the Louvre. Two of the most famous art pieces located in the Louvre are the Venus de Milo and Leonardo da Vinci's Mona Lisa. The Louvre

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itself is a beautiful building and coincides perfectly with the artwork. France is also well known for their cuisine. A normal day's meals consist of a light breakfast, normally bread, croissants, fruit and coffee; a lunch between noon and 2 pm, a variety of cheeses and salads; and an evening dinner. Dinner includes an appetizer, crudités or salad, a main dish (meat or fish with pasta or rice), some cheese or a dessert. Even with modern working conditions, the French find time to cook weekend meals with fresh ingredients, and street markets are still a popular way to buy vegetables, fish, and meat, even with the introduction of supermarkets. Wine is one of many symbols of France, and for a long time it was drunk by the French people every day. Nowadays the wine consumption has decreased to 23%. Many dishes are prepared with wine, or with an accompanying wine in mind. France seems to have an inherent aesthetic sense and appreciation of beauty and quality in life, from their architecture to their passion for food and wine. I believe this is what draws people to France; all people can appreciate their passion for life and beauty.